JEM211 Philosophy, Economics and Politics: Current Debates

Instructors:

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Place: Monday 12:30 – 13:50, room 206, Opletalova IES

MOODLE course name: JEM211 Philosophy, Economics and Politics II: Current Debates

https://dl1.cuni.cz/course/view.php?id=11874

MOODLE password: provided at the lectures

1) Course overview and aim of the course

In this course, teams of students will negotiate the resolution of one of the current events. The theme of this year's course will be selected by students after the first lecture. The list of topics is attached. The purpose of this simulated negotiation is (i) to understand the obstacles of negotiations of political and economic agreements and (ii) to learn negotiation techniques (iii) to broaden and deepen understanding of the EU affairs.

The course is divided into three parts. Firstly, we start with four lectures introducing the topic, to provide the key information to all participants. The game itself follows. The course is concluded by a follow-up and short essay.

The detailed description of the game is provided in the syllabus. All materials will be posted in moodle .

List of topics suggested for 2021:

1. Nord Stream 2 and the European Energy Policy: Shall Germany finish and use the Nord Stream 2?
2. Brexit: Shall the EU allow frictionless trade in financial services with the U.K.?
3. EU - China Trade Agreement: Should the deal be approved?
4. Covid-19: How should the EU react in the future pandemics?
5. Tax harmonization in the EU: Shall the EU harmonize the corporate tax and introduce the digital tax?

Topics in previous years:
2019/2020: Climate Change: Shall the EU countries adopt the European Green Deal?
2018/2019: Migration in the EU: Shall countries that do not accept migrants receive less EU funds?
2017/2018: Brexit negotiations, in particular the arrangement of the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
2016/2017: Italian banking crisis and the obstacles of the EU-wide resolution mechanisms of banking and fiscal crises.

2) Course schedule

1 (15.2.)	Lecture 1 J. Baxa, V. Semerák	**Game rules and general guidelines.**
2 (22.2.)	Lecture 2 J. Baxa, V. Semerák	**(depending on the topic)**
3 (1.3.)	Lecture 3 V. Semerák	**(depending on the topic)**
4 (8.3.)	Lecture 4 J. Baxa	**(depending on the topic)**
5 (15.3.)	Lecture 5 J. Baxa/V. Semerák	**(depending on the topic)**
6 (22.3.)	Time for the elaboration of the proposals and meeting with students	Teachers will meet with each group separately to ensure that all groups do understand their roles and tasks.
7 (29.3.)	Group presentations – position papers	Groups are presenting their **position papers**
8 (12.4.)	Review of the reports by other groups	Groups are reviewing the reports of the competing groups. The goal is to find weak and strong sides.
	1st voting round	Groups must vote for the binding analytical proposal / Groups must select alternatives for negotiations.
9 (19.4.)	Group presentations – Policy proposals	Groups are presenting the **policy proposals**.
10 (26.4.)	Review of the reports by other groups	Groups are reviewing the reports of the competing groups. The goal is to find weak and strong sides.
	2nd voting round	**Groups must vote for the final policy solution.**
11 (3.5)	Follow-up J. Baxa and V. Semerák	A critical review of the experience with all activities: negotiation within and between groups, voting negotiations, analysis of the winning proposals etc.
12 (10.5.)	Follow-up J. Baxa and V. Semerák	Philosophical perspective – Role of values, falsification criteria, and limited influence of expert knowledge on public opinions and policy decisions. If time permits, discussion about the essays.

3) The rules of the game

Students are divided into five groups. Each group follows its own specific interests and has always one main goal (all other mentioned interests are regarded as secondary goals).

The game is composed of two main rounds. Each main round has its own two sub-rounds.

a) The goal of the game

The main goal of the game is to negotiate the solution of the selected issue. Each group has its own specific goals and one main goal. A group does not have to follow all goals except for the main one. Some secondary goals may be contradictory so the group must decide whether to balance both goals or follow primarily just one of them.

There are several potential outcomes of any policy negotiations that can be voted, and each group has naturally different preferences towards the outcomes. The groups are expected to come up with their "distribution of preferences" towards each of the outcomes. We will discuss the chosen preferences with each group separately in the 6th week of the semester. However, we will not reveal the preferences to other groups to avoid any improper intervention in the game.

b) Groups and their main interests (might differ for the particular topic)

i) European Commission (EC) and European Parliament (EP)

Political position and national interests.
EU-wide bodies representing the EU policy stance, to some extent unifying positions of individual countries. The European Parliament is supposed to provide or not to provide consent with the negotiated agreement. The European Commission leads negotiation on behalf of the European Council which has the power to ratify the final agreement. The main interest of the group is coherent and unified EU.
If both bodies represented by one group, that group has just one vote and one voice but representatives of both policymakers may be "publicly" active. All disagreements must be solved just within the group and should not be discussed openly in front of the other groups while that would significantly harm the reputation of both bodies.
If both bodies are represented by the separate groups, they might pursue their strategies independently.
Main interests
The unified EU that is able to reach consensus (main goal).
A positive image of the EU and strengthening of the global role of the EU.

ii) Selected EU countries

See the file in moodle for more details.

iii) Reuters agency (Teachers)

Teachers do not take part in any official group. They have a role of supervisors and the Reuters news agency that in case of emergency or according to the situation may change anything in the game simply by informing players about news and unexpected development. Reuters teacher group therefore plays the role of Deus ex machina whenever they consider it as desirable.

c) Group composition and roles within the group

The maximum number of members of the group is 6. Each member of the group has specific role. The roles within the group are the following:

> **Analysts** (prepare the analytical report and provide decision-makers with necessary facts and background knowledge)
> **Decision-makers** (responsible for voting and negotiations between groups)
> **Chair of the session** (role associated only to European Commission group – responsible for chairing the sessions)

Because the whole negotiation is lead by the European Commission, each session (sub-round) is chaired by one member from the EU commission group.

d) Main rounds

All rounds are organized and chaired by the EC group. The group is responsible for organizing the debates, voting and reaching the consensus.

i) First main round

In the **first main round** the students are playing a role of economic analysts of the five groups. The role of the analysts is to prepare a position paper explaining the situation from the perspective of each group. The aim is to deliver a comprehensive and "true" interpretation of the reality and to select several proposals that can be considered as a feasible solution of the problem and to identify possible incompatibility with the EU legislation or existing trade deals.

As a "true" interpretation of the reality we regard that one which is based on facts, logical reasoning and free of lies or manipulation with facts. However, analysts of each group are expected to deliver different interpretation because of their different origin, interests or opinions.

In the **first sub-round** the **position papers** are presented by the analysts and the groups are free to discuss the proposed interpretations.

In the **second sub-round** there are two activities. At first, the groups present a critical review of the position paper of their opponents (according to the specific scheme) while the authors of the criticized analyses have the right to respond.

Secondly, at the end of the sub-round the decision-makers must meet after the session (organized by the EC group) and vote for alternative proposals that will be considered for negotiations in the next round. If the selected proposals are in potential conflict with existing legislation or trade deals, the ways how to resolve these conflicts need to be negotiated in the next stage.

Every group has just one voice while the groups openly discuss and vote. The EC-EP group must prepare a short report summarizing the reasons behind the final vote (half page is enough) and present the chosen alternatives. Any group can present more than one proposal that is allowed to be considered during the voting (e.g. group may present its solution proposal from the first-sub-round and also some more compromise variant) and more groups can present their joint proposals as well.

The voting rule (tentative): Each alternative proposal is accepted if not vetoed by any other group. Note that at this stage the group does not have to accept the alternative as such but it can express

conditions upon which any alternative could be accepted. The veto shall be used if and only if the proposal is clearly unacceptable for the group. Each group must vote for "yes" or "no". There is no neutral position possible.

Note that other voting rules are possible as well if they gain unanimous support.

ii) Second main round

The goal of the **second main round** is to negotiate the final deal.

In the **first sub-round** each group (decision-makers) must present its **policy proposal** of solution of the crisis which is then discussed. Each group shall focus on conditions under which proposed alternatives can be accepted or to argue why some alternatives shall be rejected.

The **second sub-round** again consists of a critical review of the policy reports by decision-makers from each group. We will again assign a reviewer to each group. The reviewer shall focus on possible shortcomings of the proposals. At the end of the second sub-round the final negotiations take a place and policymakers need to finalize the agreement.

Again, any group can present more than one proposals that are considered during the voting.

The voting meeting must be again organized by the EC group. The voting follows the ranking and second-round rule (explained below in a separate section).

The voting rule (tentative): Each alternative proposal is accepted if not vetoed by any other group, hence the solution has to be accepted unanimously. If no solution agreed, no EU budget adopted.

Note that the EC-EP group as a chairman of the negotiations may propose its own voting mechanism (how to vote while obeying the ranking rule). However, that mechanism must be agreed unanimously by all groups.

Stage of the game		Activity	The goal of the activity
1st main round	1st sub-round	Position paper	Identifies/interprets: Sources of the crisis Current situation "Whom to blame"
	2nd sub-round	Reviews of the position papers	Groups are reviewing the papers of the other groups (each group has been assigned as an opponent to another group). Each reviewed group has an opportunity to react and defend its position.
	2nd sub-round	Voting the most appropriate analysis	Decision-makers from each group are voting to select proposals available for the next round of negotiations. The EC-EP group as the organizer must prepare a short report summarizing the reasons behind the final vote and presenting the selected proposal.
2nd main round	1st sub-round	Policy proposals	Presents: Solution of the problem Responsibilities of each group implied by the proposal

	2nd sub-round	Reviews of the proposals	Groups are reviewing the other groups' proposals (each group has been assigned as an opponent to another group). Each reviewed group has an opportunity to react and defend its position.
	2nd sub-round	Voting the solution	Decision-makers from each group are negotiating and voting for the final agreement.

4) Grading

The grading is composed of several graded activities:

Graded activities	Points	Notes
Position paper	0-20	
Voting on the position paper	10/15	10 - losing the vote; 15 – proposal of a group elected
Policy solution proposal	0-20	
Voting on the policy solution proposal	10/20	10 - losing the vote; 20 – proposal of a group elected
Written personal assessment - short essay	0-15	
Compliance of the final deal with the group´s main goals and preferences	0-10	
Bonus points for extraordinary performance	0-10	Excellent presentations or policy proposal etc.

Students have to participate in all activities to obtain the grade.

The grade is simply based on the total points the group achieves:

Grade	Points
A	100-90
B	89-80
C	79-70
D	69-60
E	59-60
F	49-0

a) Position paper and policy proposals

The presented position paper and policy proposals are graded according to several criteria:

- the quality of the content of the proposal and the logical structure of the argument, **(10p)**
- the language of the proposal **(5p)** and
- complying with the citation standards and the quality of the used sources. **(5p)**

Requirements

<u>Position papers</u>

The papers should have between 1000 – 1500 words.

The goal of the position paper is to identify:

- The nature of the problem from the point of view of each group. The point is to provide an interpretation of the reality that can, however, implicitly suggest potential negotiating power of each group as well.
- The desired outcome of negotiations and evaluation of alternatives (what the country wants to achieve).
- Identification of key issues in each alternative subject to negotiations.
- Assessment of the impact of proposed solutions on each group.

The sources used for the arguments in the proposal should be of high quality. Groups are encouraged to use academic papers, official reports of various bodies (governments, international organizations, NGOs), respected newspaper articles (Economists, Financial Times, etc.), data or any other reliable sources. Blog discussions, Wikipedia or other commentaries can be useful sources of information as well, however note that reliability of those resources might be questionable. Thus, we strongly recommend checking the information in another independent source. Please remember that you are supposed to deliver pieces that go fairly beyond Wikipedia.

<u>Policy proposal</u>

The proposal should be large between 1000 – 1500 words

The goal of the proposal is to identify:

- the solution of the problems related to Irish border preferred by the respective group based on the set of alternatives and issues negotiated in the first round
- solutions to possible issues that limit some of the negotiating parties to accept the proposed solution.
- proposals shall be realistic (feasible to implement)

The sources used for the arguments in the proposal should be of high quality. Groups are encouraged to use academic papers, official reports of various bodies (governments, international organizations, NGOs), respected newspaper articles (Economists, Financial Times, etc.), data or any other reliable sources. Blog discussions, Wikipedia or other commentaries can be useful sources of information as well, however, note that reliability of those resources might be questionable (see above).

b) Voting on the proposals

A group that managed to negotiate that its proposal has been elected gets 15 points in the first round and 20 points in the second round. All other groups then get just 10 points. A group can, therefore, get at least 20 points (unsuccessful in both votes) or maximally 35 points (successful in both votes). An important feature of voting is that groups are allowed to present a proposal jointly if there is consensus between them. Then all proposers receive 15 points in the first round or 20 points in the second one.

c) Written assessment – essay

Every participant must then write a short essay that will reflect the game and the activities from the perspective of philosophy of science. First, you are supposed to summarize your own personal reflection of the game in a short personal assessment. Focus on what has been the most interesting issue of the game for your own and whether your strategy would differ if you would negotiate again. Second, think about the game and its outcome from a broader perspective. Pick-up one of the following question and try to evaluate the outcome from that point of view.

Relevant questions for discussion:

- Was the negotiated proposal rational?
- Was the choice of the winning proposal motivated by the facts? Do facts matter in decisions or there are other, possibly more important factors?
- What were the role of arguments and what of rhetoric in the persuasion process?
- How did the choices the group took (on what is true or the final decision) reflect the practical aspect of the problem and the state of scientific knowledge of economics?
- Was there a clear divide between what is the problem and which theory is to be used for its solution?
- What is the Fact-Value distinction and is there one?
- Was the decision proposed ethically good?
- Is there a difference between the ethically good decision and the rational decision? Wherein lies the difference?
- Was there something suboptimal about the decision procedure?

Some links

https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/decision-theory/
https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rationality-instrumental/
https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/value-theory/
https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/truth/
https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/methodological-individualism/
https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/holism-social/
https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/collective-intentionality/

You might also discuss another question, but in that case, write to us in advance to settle the topic.

Requirements on the essay:

The length of the essay (including personal statement) should be 1000 words. Not much more, please. If the length is exceeded by more than 10%, we reserve our right to decrease the points by some penalty.

We demand any essay to have a certain level in the following areas: content, logical consistency, proper literature review, academic citation style, proper English. All these areas are part of the resulting grade. Do not underestimate appropriate citation styles. Inconsistency or evident citation style mistakes belong to the most common causes of lower grades, even though it is expected that

on the master level any student is skilled in this area. We recommend using the standard citation style like MLA[1] or APA[2].

We have to warn you against any **plagiarism** attempt. We check every essay using very precise anti-plagiarism software. The consequences of any revealed cases of plagiarism are serious. A student can be called to the faculty disciplinary commission and his or her studies can even be terminated.

Tips on essay writing:

For some tips on essay writing either consult:

1) *Strategies for essay writing* by Harvard College Writing Center

http://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/pages/strategies-essay-writing

This is a great resource. It is online and it has very nice examples of how you should go about writing the essay. It goes through the whole process of writing the essay, from choosing the topic to the editing of the essay. If you read and understand this text, then you will know how to write a good essay.

2) *The Basics of Essay Writing* by Nigel Warburton

This is a basic text, which you can read quickly and get your grip on the essay fast.

3) *How to write a Thesis* by Umberto Eco

This is for more serious students. Some points are a bit outdated, but there are many important lessons, which are not in the basic texts. It is more suited for longer pieces, like a dissertation. Nonetheless, it applies to shorter texts very well.

4) Bird Nick *The Grading Key*
https://www.byrdnick.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/grading-shorthand-nick-byrd-public-domain.pdf

This is quite a short key to how the essay will approximately be graded. If you will look at it, it can be a good guide to see what is expected of you.

Of course, these texts are supplementary – that means, it is far more preferable to start writing the essay and only consult the books on essays, than to read the books and deliberate on what the author did mean by some specific points. One learns most by doing and the same applies to essay writing. Writing an essay is mainly a technique, the knowledge of explicit rules is not needed to write a good essay, but they can be a good guide. First of all, do not be afraid to write and send something you have written. In the worst-case scenario you will get to rework it with more notes on how to do it.

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[1]   https://www.library.cornell.edu/research/citation/mla#mla

[2]   http://www.apastyle.org/index.aspx

In the case of further problems write an e-mail to Andrej Virdzek - andrej.virdzek@gmail.com. Please understand, that if you are to write an essay you should start some time before the deadline. It is quite useless to start two days before deadline and then, when you get stuck, to complain about the rules of the essay not being made clear enough. If there is not something clear, write an e-mail and we will solve the problem.

For anybody who would just like to enjoy good essay writing (even though not academic) read: Montaigne, Michel; Essays of Michel de Montaigne   Hume, David; Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary

Some useful tools:

http://www.voyant-tools.org/ **-** This application analyses your text so that you see how long your text is, how long your sentences are and which words are used repeatedly. When you stumble upon such a word, then use Thesaurus.

https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/english-thesaurus **-** Thesaurus gives you an option with many synonymous expressions.

Definitions

Please, if necessary to define non-technical terms, use Oxford English Dictionary (apart from the technical terms which are directly concerned with the subject matter, or the terms which you want, for good reasons, to define on your own):

https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/

For philosophical terms use either a philosophical dictionary or find a definition on the Stanford Encyclopedia for Philosophy. It is also good to look how the philosophical term stands in comparison to the term in ordinary language (so you can compare the OED definition with the philosophical use of the term).

a) Compliance of the final deal with group´s main goals and preferences

Teachers will subjectively evaluate whether the groups were able to reach their main goals and preferences. This grading category therefore aims to evaluate a group´s ability to play the game and defend its interests. We recognize that a group may be successful in the game even though that the final deal is not the "first best" for the group.

d) Bonus points

There are two ways how bonus points can be obtained: (1) Extraordinary performance in negotiations and (2) Detection of invalid arguments.

(1) There are many ways how to negotiate. Usually, a pro-active approach leads to desired outcomes likely than passive awaiting. Teachers can give bonus point for extraordinary good performance in negotiations.

(2) Any group may identify "invalid" arguments or other „deceptions" of other groups that are based on lies, manipulation or loose thinking. The group will get **bonus point** for each successfully identified invalid argument or "deception". The bonus points are then added up at the end of the course.

Definition of the terms

It is important to note that these definitions are auxiliary and it will be up to the teachers to decide what counts and what doesn't count as their instantiation – what counts as invalid argument, what counts as a deception. We post them here mainly for information so that the members of the groups know what to expect in evaluation. In the end, the decision about which information regarding deception merits a point will be up to the teachers.

Deception is an act which has as its goal misinformation in a matter, which is important to judge the true nature of some state of affairs. It can be 1) a straightforward lie, or 2) intentional omission of a crucial fact, or 3) redefinition of terms in accordance with your goals against the normally recognized and used definitions in the context or 4) use of some fact where it is uncalled for to switch attention.

Most importantly, every invalid argument regarding important matters to the conclusion of the game will be counted as a "deception". If the other group identifies some deception from other groups, it can get a bonus point. But the identifying group needs to explain why this should count as a deception. A group must deliver very convincing and precise explanation why some argument is a deception.

Fact is a true proposition, that is a proposition which corresponds to the state of affairs in the world. **Proposition** is a sentence generally used to state some fact.

How to properly identify an "invalid" argument
As mentioned above, the group must not only identify an "invalid" argument, but more importantly explain the reason for that accusation. Let's suppose we have an argument A1 with premises:
       P1. John is English   and   P2. Mary is a dancer   therefore   R1. John is English.
          This is a formally valid argument, even though it is trivial. It is of form „P and Q therefore P" which is a valid argument form, because you can use any true propositions as P and as Q and you will necessarily get true result. If you use false propositions you have a guarantee of a false result. But if I have an argument A2:
P1. Brad Pitt is from USA   and
P2. John Smith owns a mobile phone   therefore
R2. Donald Trump is the President of USA

Then the argument is invalid even though the result is true (the reason here is the non-sequitur, which means that the result doesn't follow from the premises). There are many fallacies when presenting arguments, but also there are many ways in which argument can be valid (logical, causal etc.) Don't feel intimidated, one has a very good intuition about what is and what is not valid in most cases. Also there is no loss for the group which sends some argument and the teachers account that it was a proper argument.

For a list of possible fallacies one can start here (there is no need to learn those, this is rather for your information): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_fallacies

To identify the argument a group must send teachers an email where the argument of the other group is presented together with explanation why the argument should be regarded as a deception. Only then a group may receive bonus points. The email must be sent even though that the

arguments were identified during the class. Only identification via email is considered by the teachers.

5) Free-rider problem

It may happen that a free rider problem appears during your group work (non-cooperative group members doing "nothing" and receiving grade for the work of others). If this happens please follow our recommended procedure that we can handle the issue effectively.

1) Inform the free-rider via email (there must be evidence of the conversation) that you demand his active cooperation. Describe the amount of work necessary for the assignment, division of labor within your group and therefore his duties.
2) If he still does not increase his activity to sufficient level, please inform us and forward us your mutual communication proving his unfulfilled duties. There must be of course evidence about the division of labor, therefore we recommend you always to inform each other about your mutual duties via email.
3) If the evidence is conclusive then we take adequate action (=no points for free-rider).